

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as set forth on the following pages.

1           1.       (Currently Amended) For use with a flexible strap having a substantially uniform  
2 width and thickness and an end tab of increased thickness, a buckle for capturing and releasably  
3 retaining said end tab, said buckle comprising:

4                   a base;

5                   parallel side walls extending upwardly from and cooperating with said base to

6                               define an open-ended receiving channel having an entry end and an exit

7                               end;

8                   first slots extending transversally across said base, said buckle being attached to

9                               said strap by weaving said strap into and out of said channel through said

10                              first slots;

11                   flanges spaced vertically from said base and extending inwardly in cantilever

12                              fashion from said side walls to define an open-ended second slot

13                              communicating with and extending along the length of said receiving

14                              channel, said second slot being configured and dimensioned to

15                              accommodate longitudinal pinching and lateral insertion of said strap into

16                              said receiving channel, ~~and~~ said flanges having undersides configured to

17                              accommodate receipt of said end tab in said receiving channel via said

18                              entry end, and to releasably wedge said end tab in ~~retain~~ and prevent

19                              withdrawal of said end tab from said receiving channel via said exit end.

1           Claims 2 - 7 (Previously withdrawn)

1           8.       (Original) For use with a flexible strap having a width and thickness and an end  
2   tab of increased thickness, a buckle for capturing and releasably retaining said end tab, said  
3   buckle comprising:

4                   a base;

5                   parallel side walls extending upwardly from said base to cooperate

6                               therewith in defining an open-ended receiving channel;

7                   flanges spaced vertically from said base and extending inwardly

8                               from said side walls to define an open-ended slot communicating

9                               with said receiving channel, said flanges having converging sections

10                              leading from one end of said slot to an intermediate location

11                             along the length thereof, said slot being configured and

12                             dimensioned to accommodate longitudinal pinching and lateral insertion

13                             of said strap into said receiving channel, and said converging sections of

14                             said flanges having undersides configured to coact with said base in

15                             releasably wedging said end tab in said receiving channel.

1           9.       (Previously presented) For use with a flexible strap having a substantially  
2   uniform width and thickness and an end tab of increased thickness, a buckle for capturing and  
3   releasably retaining said end tab, said buckle comprising:

1                   a base;

2                   parallel side walls extending upwardly from and cooperating with said

3                               base to define an open-ended receiving channel having an entry end and

4                               an exit end;

5 flanges spaced vertically from said base and extending inwardly in cantilever  
6 fashion from said side walls to define an open-ended slot communicating  
7 with and extending along the length of said receiving channel, said slot  
8 being configured and dimensioned to accommodate longitudinal pinching  
9 and lateral insertion of said strap into said receiving channel, and said  
10 flanges having undersides with downwardly sloping jamming surfaces  
11 configured to frictionally retain said end tab in said receiving channel.

1 10. (Previously presented) The buckle of claims 1 or 9 wherein said flanges have  
2 converging sections leading from a maximum width of said slot at the entry end of said receiving  
3 channel to a reduced width of said slot at an intermediate location along the length of said  
4 channel.

1 11. (Previously presented) The buckle of claims 1, 8 or 9 wherein said end tab  
2 defines a shoulder extending transversally across the width of said strap, and wherein the  
3 undersides of said flanges define stop surfaces engageable with said shoulder.

1 12. (Previously presented) The buckle of claim 11 wherein said jamming surfaces  
2 slope downwardly towards said stop surfaces.

1 13. (Previously presented) The buckle of claims 8 or 9 wherein said base is secured  
2 to a section of said strap.

1 14. (Previously presented) The buckle of claims 8 or 9 wherein said base is formed  
2 as an integral part of a carrier structure.

1           15.   (Previously presented) The buckle of claim 13 further comprising  
2   attachment slots extending transversally across said base, said buckle being attached to  
3   said strap by weaving said strap into and out of said channel through said attachment  
4   slots.